

**Montgomery County Council
2009-2010 Operating Budget Testimony
John F. Kennedy Cluster
April 15, 2009**

Good evening. My name is Ricky Ford; I serve as the Cluster Coordinator for the John F. Kennedy Cluster of schools. On behalf of the Kennedy Cluster, thank you for allowing me to speak about the MCPS 2009-2010 Recommended Operating Budget.

We understand the difficult times that we face as a county, state, and country. Everyone is making sacrifices and everyone has to share the burden, even though the demand for services and resources is increasing. We know the Council understands the issues that we face in the Kennedy Cluster (ESOL, high FARMs and mobility rates, the achievement gap, etc), and these issues will be factored into any modifications that must be made to ensure that the budget issues are being addressed along with the educational issues of our children.

We agree with the underlying principle behind the 2009-2010 Recommended Operating Budget of minimizing the impact of cuts in the classroom. We would like to ensure that this budget maintains the progress made in recent years, which is evidenced by the improved performance in the elementary schools, middle schools and at Kennedy High School.

The overwhelming concern within our community is the potential loss of academic intervention staff and resources for at-risk students. This ranges from the loss of positions at signature and magnet programs to reductions in academic intervention teachers, alternative teachers, and high school literacy coaches.

The personnel cuts could also result in losing some, or all, of our accelerated instruction staff. This staff supports the students in accelerated reading and math, which allow the classroom teachers to provide more concentrated instruction to students at, or below, grade level. This could have a ripple effect in the change of instruction at the foundational level.

Some of our schools are NOT Title I, but almost qualify. They can't really afford to lose too many additional positions. If we lose too many discretionary positions, our ability to intervene with struggling students and push high achieving students will be severely limited.

In summary, we must ensure that our children are not the ones that suffer. The goals and benchmarks for our children, or schools, are not going to change. Our schools will

have to achieve the same results, but with fewer resources and it's going to be challenging.

We know that the Council is sensitive to the issues that we face in the Kennedy Cluster. We trust that you will continue to do so in this budget as well.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.